

## ABSTRACT

In a protective tape applying and separating method according to this invention, a protective tape applied by a tape applying mechanism to a surface of a wafer  
5 suction-supported by a chuck table is cut to a wafer configuration by a cutter unit. Subsequently, a protective tape having a weaker adhesion than the first protective tape is applied to the protective tape. The protective tapes forming plies are separated one by one, the upper one first, by a  
10 tape separating apparatus 15 after a thinning process of the wafer.